

VZCZCXYZ0005
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHUL #1516 1240750
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 040750Z MAY 06
FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7731
INFO RUEHBK/AMEMBASSY BANGKOK 6019
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 0591
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 7297
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 0670
RUEHUM/AMEMBASSY ULAANBAATAR 1208
RHMFISS/COMUSKOREA J5 SEOUL KOR
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RHMFISS/COMUSKOREA J2 SEOUL KOR
RHMFISS/COMUSKOREA SCJS SEOUL KOR

C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 001516

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

FOR EAP AND PRM

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/18/2015
TAGS: [PREF](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [KS](#) [KN](#)
SUBJECT: DPRK REFUGEES IN BANGKOK: AVOIDING PUBLICITY

REF: A. BANGKOK 2565

[1](#)B. SEOUL 1308

Classified By: CDA Mark Minton. Reasons 1.4 (b), (d).

[1](#)1. (C) As the case of the six North Korean refugees in Bangkok appears to be moving toward a successful conclusion, with very forthcoming cooperation from all concerned, including the RTG, ROKG, and UNHCR, Embassy Seoul wants to underscore the need to handle their arrival and resettlement in the United States quietly.

[1](#)2. (C) As Embassy Bangkok (Ref A) points out, it is well established that the DPRK will take retaliatory action against the relatives of North Koreans who defect. Pyongyang's punitive measures correspond directly to the level of embarrassment for the regime. Certainly, a high-profile arrival in the United States by a group of refugees would be perceived in Pyongyang as a major embarrassment. We have no doubt that the DPRK will attempt to identify the six refugees; if the regime were successful in that effort, there is a high probability that it would hunt down and imprison, or even execute, the refugees' family members.

[1](#)3. (C) Another important reason for handling the Bangkok Six discreetly is to protect the existing pipeline of North Korean refugees, virtually all of whom are expected to be resettled in South Korea. The ROKG has made it clear repeatedly, most recently two weeks ago in Ref B, that it fears publicity would jeopardize its own refugee pipelines, both in Southeast Asia and in Mongolia. The ROK's unfortunate experience in 2004, when the highly-publicized arrival of 468 North Korean refugees from Vietnam led Hanoi to cease further cooperation on refugees, shows that this fear is well-founded.

[1](#)4. (C) We are encouraged by the cooperation extended by the ROKG, RTG and UNHCR, and, in the process, we have established an informal framework for implementing the most important aspect of the North Korea Human Rights Act: resettling North Korean refugees in the United States. We now need to avoid publicity, which would undoubtedly make the ROKG and regional governments hesitant to work with us in the future. We need to protect our partners--and this informal framework--to bring in more North Korean refugees to the United States, as mandated in the NKHRA.

